

Message Text

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15
ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: ELAB PINT AR
SUBJECT: BUENOS AIRES LIGHT AND POWER WORKERS RETURN TO NORMAL
WORK PACE

REF: BA 7103 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY. NOTWITHSTANDING A NEW FLURRY OF SABOTAGE ACTIONS, BUENOS AIRES' LIGHT AND POWER WORKERS ARE WORKING NORMALLY NOW FOLLOWING THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO CRACK DOWN ON THE UNION ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO. WHILE THE UNION WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE RE-TREATED IN THE WAKE OF THE GOVERNMENT ACTION, UNION LEADER STILL PREFERS TO SEE SIGNS OF HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION IS BEING REASSESSED AT THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE ARMED FORCES.
END SUMMARY.

2. UNION SOURCES HAVE CONFIRMED NEWS REPORTS THAT WORK ACTIVITIES HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR NORMAL STATE AT SEGBA AND ITALO-ARGENTINA INSTALLATIONS AND MAINTENANCE CREWS ARE REPAIRING MACHINERY DAMAGED DURING THE STRIKE. ALTHOUGH MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES REPORTED CONTINUED ACTS OF SABOTAGE (INCLUDING BOMBINGS AND SEVERAL "ACCIDENTS") ALONG WITH POWER AND WATER SHORTAGES LAST WEEK, THE "LUZ Y FUERZA" WORKERS EVIDENTLY WORKED AT A MORE OR LESS NORMAL PACE DURING MOST OF THE WEEK, WITH THE MAJOR EXCEPTION BEING A ONE-DAY PROTEST OVER THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A FELLOW
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WORKER NAMED ENRIQUE BALBUENA AND HIS WIFE. PRESUMED BY THE

UNION TO HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED BY POLICE AGENTS, BALBUENA WAS RELEASED AFTER BEING TORTURED; HIS WIFE HAS NOT RETURNED AND IS BELIEVED TO BE DEAD. SINCE THE END OF LAST WEEK WE HAVE SEEN NO FURTHER REPORTS OF SABOTAGE, ALTHOUGH SERVICE WAS STILL CURTAILED IN SOME AREAS A WEEK AGO AS A RESULT OF THE LOW LEVEL OF MAINTENANCE DURING THE STRIKE.

3. WHILE UNION REPRESENTATIVES DO NOT ADMIT THAT THEY HAVE BEEN DEFEATED, WE BELIEVE THAT A COMBINATION OF "GET TOUGH" MEASURES ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT ON OCT. 27 (SEE REFTTEL) HAVE FORCED THE UNION AND THE WORKERS TO RETREAT, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY. FOLLOWING THE ISSUANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT COMMUNIQUE OF OCT. 27, MILITARY GUARDS WERE DOUBLED AT THE LIGHT AND POWER INSTALLATIONS AND OVER 40 UNION MEMBERS WERE ARRESTED. THERE WAS A REPORT THAT EX-LOCAL LEADER OSCAR SMITH WAS AMONG THOSE DETAINED, BUT THIS PROVED TO BE FALSE. NEVERTHELESS, EX-MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF THE LOCAL UNION BELIEVE THERE ARE ORDERS OUT FOR THEIR ARREST AND THEY ARE TAKING EVASIVE MEASURES TO PROTECT THEIR MOVEMENTS. THE UNION WAS ALSO PUT ON THE DEFENSIVE BY A PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OVER TV AND IN THE OTHER MEDIA PROVIDING ESTIMATES OF THE PROPERTY DAMAGE WROUGHT DURING THE STRIKE, EXHORTING THE WORKERS TO CEASE THEIR ALLEGEDLY ANTI-PATRIOTIC ACTIVITIES, AND TENDING TO BLUR IN THE PUBLIC MIND THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN STRIKE ACTIVITY BY THE WORKERS AND TERRORIST ACTS BY THE GUERRILLAS IN THE SUPPOSED NAME OF A FICTITIOUS "CGT OF RESISTANCE." AS DE FACTO "LUZ Y FUERZA" LEADER JUAN JOSE TACCONE PUT IT IN A RECENT CONVERSATION, "A TYPICAL WORKER ACT OF REPRISAL IS TO LOOSEN A VALVE AND LET THE OIL LEAK OUT; THE INDISCRIMINATE BOMBING OF MACHINERY AND WORKERS IS TOTALLY ALIEN TO UNION HISTORY AND IS CLEARLY THE WORK OF THE GUERRILLAS." WHEN A GUERRILLA COMMANDO UNIT STORMED A TV STATION IN LA PLATA BY FORCE LAST WEEK AND BROADCAST A MESSAGE EXHORTING THE WORKERS TO SUPPORT THE LUZ Y FUERZA STRIKERS, THE UNION FELT OBLIGED TO ISSUE A REPLY DISASSOCIATING ITSELF FROM THE SUBVERSIVES' EXHORTATION.

4. WHILE THE WORKERS WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE SUSPENDED THEIR PROTEST ACTION WITHOUT ANY VISIBLE SIGN OF ACHIEVING THEIR OBJECTIVES--NOT EVEN WITH RESPECT TO THEIR PROPOSAL TO SIT DOWN WITH MANAGEMENT AND DISCUSS THE ISSUES--TACCONE MAINTAINS THERE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IS STILL HOPE THAT A WAY CAN BE FOUND OUT OF THE IMPASSE. HE BELIEVES THE FACT THAT THE DRAFT LAW DEROGATING PORTIONS OF STATE ENTERPRISE COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS WAS NOT ISSUED LAST WEEK, AS SCHEDULED, IS EVIDENCE THAT THE UNION'S MESSAGE IS GETTING THROUGH AND THAT THE ISSUES ARE BEING REEVALUATED AT THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE GOVERNMENT. REPORTS THAT SEGBA IS UNILATERALLY RECONSIDERING THE MOST OBVIOUS CASES OF INJUSTICE COMMITTED, I.E. THE INCLUSION IN THE DISMISSAL LISTS

OF THOSE WITHIN A FEW MONTHS OF MEETING THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR RETIREMENT ARE ANOTHER SUGGESTION PERHAPS OF A CHANGING ATTITUDE. TACCONE ALSO ASSERTS THAT JOURNALISTS AND OTHER OPINION LEADERS EXPRESS ASTONISHMENT WHEN HE SHOWS THEM UNION DATA DEMONSTRATING THAT WHILE SEGBA'S OUTPUT NEARLY DOUBLED BETWEEN 1966 AND 1976 AND ITS CUSTOMERS INCREASED BY MORE THAN 42 PERCENT, THE QUANTITY OF DIRECT-HIRE PERSONNEL ACTUALLY DROPPED SOMEWHAT (FROM 25,705 IN 1966 TO 25,402 IN 1976). SUCH BEING THE CASE, TACCONE SAYS, THE QUESTION IS BEING ASKED IN HIGH PLACES WHY SEGBA WAS CHOSEN TO BE AMONG THE FIRST STATE ENTERPRISES TO BE SUBJECTED TO A RATIONALIZATION OF PERSONNEL. HOWEVER, WE SHOULD ADD THAT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE EARLIER ARTICLES IN "LA OPINION", WHICH WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED, WE HAVE SEEN FEW SIGNS IN THE MEDIA IN RECENT DAYS THAT THE UNION'S POSITION IS BEGINNING TO TAKE HOLD OF PUBLIC OPINION.
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